

CIA HISTORICAL REVIEW PROGRAM
RELEASE AS SANITIZED

2003

8 Sep 53

Original returned to C/WH on 9/11/53
with following notation by FGW:

"This is an adequate memo of the conversation -- even though it does include some things that I did not say, and omits other things that I did say. The importance of taking notes to supplement memory is called to yr attention."

FGW

~~SECRET~~
Security Information

8 September 1953

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD:

SUBJECT: Briefing of Ambassador John E. Peurifoy re Guatemala.

1. Ambassador John E. Peurifoy was briefed regarding the present situation in Guatemala by Mr. Frank Wisner on 1 September 1953. Present were Mr. J. Lampton Berry, Colonel J. C. King, and []
[] Mr. Wisner pointed out that conditions in Guatemala are obviously adverse to U.S. interests in view of the close working alliance between the administration of President Jacobo Arbenz and the Communist Party. It was noted that this alliance, through formation of a Communist affiliated labor confederation, persecution of foreign economic interests, enactment and implementation of a confiscatory agrarian reform law, court packing and conduct of an aggressively anti-American, pro-Communist publicity campaign, has achieved virtual dominance over national political and economic life. Further, it was observed that the four Communist controlled political parties which comprise the administration coalition hold 51 of the 56 seats in congress, while Communists dominate the National Electoral Board, the Agrarian Department, the Institute of Social Security, the Labor Courts, the Ministry of Education, the Secretariat of Propaganda and the official press and radio. Mentioned, among effects of this alliance upon Guatemalan foreign relations, were the active support of leftist elements in other Central American countries through provision of bases, press and communication facilities, cash, transportation, agents and assassins.

2. Mr. Peurifoy was advised that this Agency has now been authorized to take strong action against the government of President Arbenz in the hope of facilitating a change to a more democratically oriented regime. Some of the past preliminary planning and activity toward this end was reviewed and the point clearly established that success must depend, to a great extent, upon support of our activities by the American Ambassador to Guatemala within the limitations of the "need to know" policy. It was particularly noted that excessive security measures on the part of an ambassador which result in hampering agent activity through unusual limitations of communication and the imposition of time consuming burdens of cover activity are plainly not appropriate. It was also stressed that no aspect of this operation is cleared for discussion with any save specifically designated individuals.

3. Mr. Peurifoy stated that he understood the situation in general terms, appreciated the need for positive action and would be prepared to support the program as American Ambassador to Guatemala. For planning purposes he gave 15 October 1953 as a possible date for his arrival in that country. In discussing station personnel he expressed the hope that among the qualifications of the Chief would be complete facility with the Spanish language.

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